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REV. MR. HARRIS'S SERMON,

AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE

Olive Branch Lodge.



A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

FREE MASONS,

AT

OXFORD,

SEPTEMBER 13th, A. L. 5798,

By the Reverend Brother

THADDEUS MASON HARRIS, A. M.

• CHAPLAIN to the GRAND LODGE of MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE DAY WHEN THE

Olive Branch Lodge

WAS PUBLICLY

CONSECRATED,

AND ITS

OFFICERS INSTALLED,

By the R. W. ISAIAH THOMAS, Esq.

GRAND MASTER, *PRO TEM.*

"Jam orator aderat—veniamque rogavit,
Paciferæque manu RAMUM pretendit OLIVÆ."

VIRGIL, Æn.

PRINTED AT WORCESTER,
By LEONARD WORCESTER.

A. L. 5799.





MR. HARRIS'S SERMON,
DELIVERED AT OXFORD,
BEFORE THE FRATERNITY OF
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS.



LUKE ii. 14.

*"Glory to GOD in the highest, and on earth
peace and good will towards men."*



HE Angelic hosts, bringing "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people," descended to earth from their spheres of celestial glory to announce the arrival of the long expected Messiah,—
"the

“ the desire of all nations.” They came as the retinue of the Heavenly Prince, to honor his mission, and congratulate mankind on his advent. Transported with the happy prospects which were now opening to the view of the world, they pronounced “ peace on earth and good will towards men,” to be the design and legitimate fruits of this new dispensation. The words of our text form the choral song with which they celebrated an event so glorious to God, so auspicious to *man*. They express the matter, as well as ground and reason of their acclamations of joy. And they supply a fit topic of discourse before an Institution which breathes the same sentiment, and cooperates with the same plans of benevolence and peace. In commenting upon them, we shall consider how they are indicative of the design and effect of the *Christian Religion* ; and then apply them

them to the purposes of the present assembling, by shewing how expressive they are of the pacific and benevolent disposition of *Free Masonry*.

Let us, *first*, examine the peaceful genius and tendency of the Christian religion.

The many prophecies, in the *Old Testament*, which relate to the Messiah, and intimate the design and foretel the effect of his mission, uniformly speak of him as coming to restore peace on earth, and to promote the best temporal and spiritual interests of mankind. They give him the title of "the Prince of peace."* They declare, that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."† They describe the genius and auspicious influence of that dominion which he will exercise, (after the

* Isaiah ix. 6.

† ix. 7.

the Oriental manner) by a beautiful assemblage of exquisite and expressive imagery ; comparing its effects in reconciling the most hostile, and reforming and taming the most savage dispositions, to a softening of brutal natures,—to “the wolf and the leopard, no longer fierce, lying down with the lamb and the kid ; the calf and the young lion led in the same peaceful band, and that by a little child ; the heifer and the she bear feeding together, and lodging their young, of whom they used to be so jealous, in the same place ; and all the serpent kind becoming so harmless that the sucking child may safely put his hand on the basilisk’s den, and play on the hole of the aspic.”*—Finally, it was promised that
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* Isai. xi. 6—9. “The Greek and Latin Poets have painted their Golden Age in very beautiful colors, but the exquisite imagery of Isaiah stands unequalled and inimitable.”

Smith’s Summary View of the Prophets, page 39.

the Messiah should come to publish peace,* and to establish with mankind "the covenant of peace."†

Concurring with these predictions, his religion is stiled, in *the New Testament*, "the gospel of peace."‡ "He indeed came and spake peace to the people." He consoled his disciples by assuring them that in him they should have peace.|| And he left them a legacy in the same strain.§

So remarkable a frequency and agreement, in the use and application of this word and sentiment, naturally excites our curiosity to know in what sense he brought peace on earth, and produced good will among men.** This is the subject of our present enquiry.

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I. The

* Isai. lii. 7. Nahum i. 15. † Isai. liv. 10. Ezek. xxxiv. 10. ‡ Rom. x. 15. || John xvi. 33. § John xiv. 27. ** Bishop Porteus.

I. The words of our text may be considered as a proclamation of SPIRITUAL PEACE.

Christ, who came to restore the human race, alienated from God by wicked works, made our peace with the justly offended Deity, and thus procured us that peace of mind which the world could not give, nor we otherwise obtain.

“He is our peace, saith the Apostle, that he might reconcile us to God.”*

“He came and preached peace to you (the Gentiles) that were afar off, and to them (the Jews) which were nigh.”†

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”‡ These expressions, and the many others of the like import in the christian scriptures, shew us that the
primary

* Ephes. ii. 16. † Ephes. ii. 17. ‡ Rom. v. 1.

primary sense in which this peace is procured, is that of a *spiritual nature*. But,

2. Our text may be considered as announcing peace on earth *in a* TEMPORAL SENSE.

The life, the character, the instructions of Jesus, all exhibited and recommended benevolence and peace. And his religion is eminently calculated to promote "peace on earth and good will towards men," not only by restraining or destroying every passion which is unfriendly to human happiness, but by exciting every virtue, and cherishing every disposition conducive to the mutual interests, and conciliatory of the mutual regards of mankind.

One great object of christianity is to open the heart, improve the social affections,

tions, and render man benevolently disposed towards all his fellow beings ; to promote the most friendly intercourse and kind offices ; to establish human society in peace and good order ; and to contribute to the security, comfort, and true enjoyment of this life, as well as to lead men to eternal happiness and glory beyond the grave. The system itself is universal benevolence and philanthropy. Its pacific nature and amicable tendency will clearly appear, if we examine its general structure, or consider the spirit of its laws. It recommends an affectionate temper and demeanor, represses ill will and injuries of every kind and degree, and forbids every act by which the peace or enjoyment of our neighbor may be interrupted. " Follow peace with all men" * — " if it be possible, as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all
 " men" —

* Heb. xii. 14.

men"*—"have peace one with another"†—study the things which make for peace"‡—are familiar and frequent injunctions, are lessons which perpetually recur in the writings of the New Testament.

So that in this religion there is nothing hostile to the peace of society, or the happiness of mankind : But, on the contrary, all its influence is on the side of human felicity. And it is certain, that, the more christianity is known and followed, the more will men become improved, and the fewer will be their contentions, corruptions and crimes : The more mild will be their governments, the more equitable their laws, and the more secure and lasting their national prosperity.

In

* Rom. xii. 18. † Mark ix. 50. ‡ Rom. xiv. 19.

In every country over which christianity has spread its peaceful and conciliating influence, it has meliorated the whole constitution of society ; rectified its general codes and institutions ; mixed with the civil arrangements and social habits of life ; and displayed its effects in common transactions and private intercourse, in every scene of public engagement or domestic enjoyment. " It has softened the tyranny of Kings and the rigor of the laws ; and restrained the pride of ambition, the horrors of war, and the insolence of conquest."* Thus has it been the cause of genuine and efficient benefit to mankind. And we may confidently assert, that, were the gospel universally received, rightly understood, and conscientiously practised, under its mild dominion there would be no wars nor fightings ; no tyranny, civil or religious ;
no

* Porteus.

no injustice, envy, nor malice ; no public or private wrongs : But peace and love, freedom and benevolence, would bless the whole world. What a change would take place in the condition of mankind, were christianity to obtain such an extensive influence, such a glorious triumph ! How prosperous and happy would all nations be in “ the abundance of peace !”

Such is the peaceful genius and tendency of the christian dispensation !

I will now close my discourse by observing that the language of our text is also the expression of FREE MASONRY.

All its plans are pacific. It co-operates with our blessed religion in regulating the tempers, restraining the passions, sweetening the dispositions, and
harmonizing

harmonizing the discordant interests of men. In its bosom flows cheerily the milk of human kindness ; and its heart expands with love and good will. It wears " the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." In one hand it holds out *the olive branch* of peace ; and in the other the liberal donation of charity.

In all countries, and in all ages "*the true and accepted*" have been found to conduct as peaceable citizens, and acknowledged to be the firm and decided supporters of good order, government, and religion. How much, then, are we surprized to find opposers to an association whose whole law is peace, and whose whole disposition is love ; which is known to discourage by an express prohibition the introduction and discussion of political or religious topics in its assemblies ; and which forbids in the most positive and solemn

solemn manner all plots, conspiracies, and rebellions. But, notwithstanding the ignorant mistake, and the prejudiced censure the Society, we are persuaded that its *real* character is too well known, and its credit too well supported, to be injured by their misrepresentations, or destroyed by their invectives. When they charge us with demoralizing principles, we will tell them that some of the most orthodox and respectable *Clergymen* are of our order ; and when they impute to us disorganizing attempts, we will remind that WASHINGTON is our patron and friend.

“ Little should we deserve the name of *the Sons of peace*, if we violated our allegiance as subjects ; much less should we merit the protection of the Legislature, if we gave the slightest encouragement to machinations against the na-

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tional

tional tranquility, or the poisonous breath of seditious calumny."* That we depart from evil and do good, and that we uniformly follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another, and promote the general welfare of the community to which we belong, and of mankind at large, is at once our characteristic profession, our duty, our interest, and our praise. And while we thus feel and act, and are thus known to the world, we may be perfectly easy about those unfriendly suggestions which have been propagated against the Society; which, however, none will believe who read our Constitutions, and none will fear who see our conduct.

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* Dr. WATKINS' charge at the expulsion of a mason in England, who had "persisted in declaiming on state affairs, in a manner which was calculated to excite disaffection to Government." 8vo. Lond. 1796.

I salute the Officers and Brethren of the Lodge this day publickly organized, with fraternal affection. "Peace be unto you, and peace to your helpers."* Pleasant be your hours of private intercourse ; blest be their tendency and happy their effects.

Under the peaceful shade of your flourishing OLIVE BRANCH may you find refreshment. Fair be its promising flowers, and plentiful its rich fruits ! And may the salutary oil it distils, heal all the wounds which care, trouble, or calumny may make in your hearts ; and, like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, make your face to shine with gladness, and diffuse far around you the grateful and reviving perfume of honor, praise, and glory !

Peace

* 1 Chron. xii. 18.

Peace be within the walls, and prosperity to the interests of every lodge! Peace to the brethren: And "may the God of peace himself give us peace always by all means!"

AMEN!

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